

EDINA PARK BOARD
7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
FEBRUARY 12, 2002

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom White, Mike Damman, Ardis Wexler, Floyd Grabiell,
Andy Finsness, Allyson Grande, George Klus, Jeff Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Linda Presthus, Dave Fredlund, Karla Sitek

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Ed MacHolda, Susie Miller, Vince Cockriel,
Tom Horwath

I. APPROVAL OF THE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2001 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Floyd Grabiell MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 11, 2001 PARK BOARD MINUTES. George Klus SECONDED THE MOTION.

MINUTES APPROVED.

II. WELCOME NEW PARK BOARD MEMBER, JEFF JOHNSON, SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. White introduced and welcomed Jeff Johnson, the new Park Board member. It was noted Mr. Johnson has been on the School Board since January 1, 2002.

III. PRESENTATION BY CITY FORESTER, TOM HORWATH

Presentation: Tom Horwath, Contracted City Forester.

It was noted Mr. Horwath is in his twelfth year with the City of Edina and has held positions in this capacity for 22 years.

Tree Inspection History: Dutch Elm disease began in the early 1970's and over 10,000 Elm trees have been removed in Edina. In the Country Club District 800 Elms had the disease and 90% of those were injected. Oak Wilt is another infectious disease, whereby the City contracted the Kunde Company, an expert in Oak Wilt. Not all oaks need to be removed if they have Oak Wilt.

Mr. Horwath takes care of the trees and tree planting in the parks. He also enforces a tree ordinance that requires 16 feet over streets and 8 feet over sidewalks. There have been

accidents due to low branches. Mr. Horwath follows a six-year tree-trimming schedule in six different districts of the city. He also monitors shrubs and weeds on the boulevard and directs concerns to the residents so they can take care of their trees themselves. Mr. Horwath also focuses his attention on young trees because if young trees are trimmed and cared for properly, their future health is improved. Mr. Horwath pointed out that the storm that went through Edina a few years ago would have caused a lot less damage if the trees were properly cared for.

Mr. Horwath also supervises a tree crew, hazardous tree inspections and responds to approximately 1,000 calls from residents to give them information and inspects their trees. Mr. Horwath pointed out that Buckthorn is a concern in Edina because it has taken over areas and natural plants. He noted that Buckthorn can grow 30 feet high and 12 inches in diameter. Mr. Horwath estimates there are approximately one million Buckthorn plants in Edina. He explained that to remove the Buckthorn he uses a weed wrench, which will pull out a Buckthorn that is up to 10 feet high and 2 inches in diameter. He also noted that when a Buckthorn is cut approximately 8-10 sprout off of the cut Buckthorn within a year. Mr. Horwath pointed out that currently he has an Eagle Scout working on the Paul Carlson property to remove a lot of the Buckthorn.

The other main areas he is working on reducing Buckthorn right now are:

- Creek Valley Park - wooded lot nearby is 90% Buckthorn, which can potentially ruin the existing trees.
- VanValkenburg Park- clear out for white oaks.
- Bredesen Park - Eagle Scouts are currently working on this area as well.

Mr. Klus requested that the Highland Park pathway be cleaned up on the hillside. Vince Cockriel, Park Superintendent, stated that another Eagle Scout is currently working on that site. Mr. Klus also requested that the Buckthorn be removed by the soccer fields and ball diamonds.

Mr. Klus also asked Mr. Horwath and Mr. Cockriel if they were going to enforce homeowners to control Buckthorn to which Mr. Cockriel replied not at this time because the spread of Buckthorn is currently out of control throughout the community.

Ms. Wexler pointed out that by the corner of Tracy and Countryside School near the fence and pond it is overgrown and unsafe. People cannot see around the corner. Mr. Cockriel responded that they do not clear plant growth inside the fence, but that they do clear around the outside of the fence when a clear-view issue exists. Inside the fence is considered to be a nature area.

Mr. White asked what are we doing chemically to fight Buckthorn to which Mr. Horwath replied that they are currently testing chemicals and what seems to work best is 25% roundup concentrate. The concentrate needs to be sprayed immediately after the Buckthorn is pulled out. He also noted that Buckthorn should not be cut, it needs to be pulled out.

IV. PRESENTATION BY PARK SUPERINTENDENT, VINCE COCKRIEL

Vince Cockriel has been the Park Superintendent for the City of Edina for the past 15 years serving in a supervisory capacity.

Mr. Cockriel currently supervises the full-time employees and is very proud of and happy with his current staff. He noted that some of his staff have four-year college degrees and stressed that he is very fortunate to have such highly educated, skilled, and experienced staff. Mr. Cockriel pointed out that Van Valkenburg and Courtney Fields are the best in the state mainly due to the skill, dedication, and extra efforts of his maintenance staff.

Mr. Cockriel indicated that he is currently planning their massive spring clean up where all employees from public works, enterprise maintenance staff and park maintenance staff all work together on this effort.

Mr. Cockriel pointed out that Edina is also known for the best ice in the metro area and commented that many of the other metro cities call Edina to ask how we are able to build and maintain such quality outdoor ice.

Mr. Cockriel also manages the deer and geese population control management programs.

Mr. Cockriel also noted that the annual Park Maintenance Department budget is now just over two million dollars.

New major construction projects for 2002 include: new playground equipment at Heights Park, Aquatic Center renovations and improvements, ADA pathways at many of the playground sites and Lewis Park field renovations.

Ms. Wexler indicated that she is concerned with the algae in the pond on the Northwest corner of 70th Street and Hwy 100. Mr. Cockriel explained that the property is designed to serve as a water retention pond for Highway 100 runoff. The park department did treat the area last year and will continue to treat it this year.

It was noted that the DNR is very pleased with the success of using Highlands Lake as a rearing pond for walleyes. It was noted that 50,000 walleye fry were placed in the lake in the spring and over 20,000 were successfully netted out in late fall later that year, which is considered to be a very high percentage return on investment. The DNR would like to continue to use Highlands Lake as a rearing pond for walleyes.

Mr. Keprios stated that Mr. Cockriel and Mr. Horwath do an excellent job and are both fabulous staff.

V. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mike Damman nominated Tom White to be Chair of the Edina Park Board for 2002. Ardis Wexler MOVED TO CLOSE THE NOMINATIONS. Floyd Grabiell SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED.

Floyd Grabiell nominated George Klus to be Vice Chair of the Edina Park Board for 2002. Ardis Wexler MOVED TO CLOSE THE NOMINATIONS. Jeff Johnson SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED.

VI. SUB-COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – TOM WHITE

Mr. White indicated that the Sub-Committee did meet regarding the consideration of a future feasibility survey and future park improvement referendum. It was decided not to go forward with a park improvement referendum at this point in time. The Sub-Committee agreed that we should continue the current practice of funding park improvements through the Capital Improvement Plan, Developers Fund and other available sources. The Sub-Committee recommended:

“Do not go forward with a park improvement referendum at this point in time. Continue funding park improvements through the Capital Improvement Plan, Developers Fund and other available sources other than a general obligation bond at least until the year 2004. Further, the Park Board should work towards a community wide needs-assessment survey to be implemented during the year 2004, at which time the needs will be re-evaluated and determine if a future park improvement referendum is necessary to meet those identified and validated needs.”

Ms. Wexler recommended a change to the second to the last sentence to read:

“Further we should work toward a community wide needs-assessment survey to be implemented during the year 2004, at which time the park needs will be reevaluated and a determination be made as to if a future park improvement referendum is necessary to meet those identified and validated needs”.

With changes the recommendation is as follows:

“The Park Board recommends to not go forward with a park improvement referendum at this point in time. We should continue funding through the Capital Improvement Plan, Developers Fund and other available sources. Further, we should work toward a community wide needs-assessment survey to be implemented during the year 2004, at which time the park needs will be reevaluated and a determination be made as to if a future park improvement referendum is necessary to meet those identified and validated needs.”

George Klus MOVED TO ACCEPT THE SUB COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Floyd Grabiell SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

VII. NOMINATIONS FOR MAYOR'S COMMENDATION AWARDS

Mr. Cockriel recommended that the "Minnesota Tree Trust" would be a good candidate for the Mayor's Commendation Award. Mr. MacHolda recommended that the "Edina Football Association" and the "Edina Soccer Club" be considered for the Mayor's Commendation Award.

Tom White MOVED TO TABLE THE NOMINATION FOR THE MAYOR'S COMMENDATION AWARD. George Klus SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

VIII. UPDATES

A. Lewis Park Soccer/Football Fields Renovation Project - Mr. Keprios reported on the City Council's discussion on the Lewis Park Field renovation project. There is concern as to the wisdom of going with only 9" of engineered topsoil versus 12" on topsoil. The deduct alternate was bid at \$44,000. Mr. Keprios stated that the \$44,000 for three more inches of topsoil could be drawn from the Developers Fund, which currently has a balance of over \$100,000. Mrs. Wexler indicated that she would like to keep the Developers Fund in reserve. Mr. Keprios stated that his recommendation remains to accept the deduct alternate because it is still unlikely that any significant buried debris will surface within the next 40 years.

Mr. Johnson asked what are other cities doing and suggested having Anderson Johnson answer some of those questions.

Mr. Keprios stated one other funding source for this project could be the \$40,000 in the CIP that is earmarked for park improvements at Sherwood Park. In discussions with the City Engineer, Wayne Houle, there is a possibility that the Utility Fund could help pay for improvements to the existing utility building at Sherwood Park that could possibly include an extended roof to serve as a picnic shelter and patio area.

Mr. Finsness stated that this is a \$500,000 project and we should do it right.

Mr. Johnson commented on how the West field is currently unplayable. Ms. Grande asked why we cannot complete all the fields to which Mr. Keprios responded that there is a financial barrier. Ms. Grande asked if the other fields are safe for the kids. Mr. Keprios explained that our maintenance staff does their best with existing conditions and even then some fields become unsafe due to poor sub-soils, overuse, and weather.

Mr. Johnson questioned field space while these two fields are down. Mr. MacHolda stated that there will be enough space for games, but not practices.

Mr. Klus indicated that he was contacted by the Edina Football Association and they are concerned about the fields they have access to. Mr. MacHolda responded that the Football Association is actually in the best situation because their game fields consist of

Van Valkenburg and Courtney, which are the best fields around. He noted that the concern with the Football Association is their practice fields and because of the shortage of fields there is nothing he can do.

B. Skate Park – Mr. Keprios indicated that the original plan has been flip flopped and that the parking lot will now be east of the park, which places the skate park closer to the fire station but further from Richfield resident homes.

Currently the Skate Park is on hold because of financial reasons. Richfield is unsure if they are going to be able to spend \$80,000 on the skate park because of a 1.3 million dollar loss of State funds.

C. Dog Park - Mr. Keprios indicated that the off-leash dog park has been put on hold. We recently learned that the Minneapolis Park Board does not in fact have permission yet to use the land. The property is owned by the Minneapolis Public Works Department but is within the boundaries of the City of Edina and the city of St. Louis Park.

D. Youth Athletic Associations Presidents Meeting - Mr. Keprios stated that their evening meeting with the youth athletic association presidents was a very positive and productive meeting. Mr. Keprios stated that the main issues with the Athletic Associations are the fields, facilities and gymnasium space. Also, the presidents are looking at developing a common “drug and alcohol policy” between all of the associations. Currently most of the policies are similar for kids, but differs for involved parents.

IX. OTHER

A. Park Board Members – It was noted that Andy Finsness, Linda Presthus, and Karla Sitek have been appointed by the Mayor and City Council for another three-year term with the Park Board.

B. Metro Council Park and Open Space Commission – It was noted Ms. Wexler is on the Metro Council Park and Open Space Commission, along with three other people from the Three Rivers Park District Board (formerly South Hennepin Parks). As part of the Commission, Ms. Wexler was asked to attend the NRPA Congress in Tampa next October. Ms. Wexler asked if any staff attends this conference. Mr. Keprios replied that typically he does attend most of these conferences, however, due to the potential cutbacks in State funding this year, there is no out-of-town travel allowed this year. Ms. Wexler noted that she is willing to attend sessions that we feel will be beneficial to the Edina Park and Recreation Department. Ms. Wexler also commented that it was a unanimous decision to send her to the conference this October. Mr. Keprios stated if anyone would like further information regarding this conference or the National Recreation and Park Association, they should visit the NRPA website at: www.activeparks.org

C. First Tier Regional Trail – Mr. Keprios noted that Edina is currently involved in creating a First Tier Regional Trail through Edina. It was noted that Three Rivers Park

District recently published a new trail map to which Ms. Wexler stated that she will bring some of these maps to the next Park Board meeting.

D. Pool Update - Mr. Klus asked for a pool update at the March Park Board meeting. Mr. MacHolda noted that he will provide a presentation.

E. After Dance Park Rentals - Mr. Keprios shared information regarding the after dance park rentals. He noted that we are making park facilities available for students to rent after Homecoming, Sadie Hawkins, Sweetheart, and Prom dances. This program has been set up to offer students a safe environment close to home after dances, which also connects them with adult chaperones as part of the Connecting With Kids initiative. He pointed out that Susie Miller and Donna Tilsner coordinated these efforts. The sites reserved for Sweetheart Dance were: Weber, Normandale, Creek Valley and Centennial Lakes. He noted that Ms. Tilsner and Mr. Shirley supervised the Centennial Lakes site, which was made available until 2:00 a.m.

F. School District Fees - Mr. Keprios commented that Doug Johnson from the School District has indicated that the School District may soon be charging a fee to use the gymnasiums at the schools.

X. ADJOURNMENT

George Klus MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:10 PM. Jeff Johnson SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED.